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"THE FAITH OF THE MINISTER SERVING IN THE PARISH"

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Good to be home and to see old friends... There is always some ambiguity about returning. Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again, and you can't and everyone of us has felt foolish in the inevitable effort. I lived three blocks from here. I drove by the house this morning and it's different. They painted the shutters a different color, took out the bushes I planted. On the other hand this place is only a "sort-of" home. My connections with Lutherans go way back. I married one - in a place with the auspicious name, Trinity Lutheran Church. She became a Presbyterian only when she had no other alternatives and would, I fear, return to the fold if given half an opportunity.

In Divinity School the first and most lasting

impressions were made by Lutherans: Joseph Sittler - Jaraslav Pelikan and Granger Westburg. My flirtation with the sons and daughters of Luther continued. Here - in Columbus - a very good friend was Howard Wilson - at Capital, who at least studied in Edinburgh and Walter Bowman who did so many things for Broad Street Presbyterian Church that some of my folks thought he was the pastor. And then, a favorite idea took shape and Broad Street established a Theologian in Residence program and Walter was the theologian, followed by others - which put Lutheran theology in a Presbyterian parish with, I trust, benefits to both.

Come to think of it - that's all Lutheran theology needs - is a Presbyterian polity: then it wouldn't have nearly as much time on its hands in which to be reflective.

In any event, it continues. My path occasionally crosses Martin Marty's and he actually knows my name. But that's nothing much: Marty

knows every ordained clergyperson in North America by name. The Dustin Hoffman autistic in Rain_____ memorizes the phone book. Marty knows all of us...

Anyhow, it's hard to like Garrison Keillor and not at least have great sympathy for Lutherans. Keillor, I suspect, is a closet Calvinist, or cryptic Catholic, or secret Jesuit. he loves - or feels sorry for - Pastor Inquist...but truth often comes out of the mouth of Father Emil.

When Father Emil announces his retirement, Clarence Bunson stops by to visit.

"I hope they're not going to give me an ugly plaque," Father Emil says.

Clarence responds "We'll give you a trip to Florida."

"Why not Jamaica?"

"I don't think old priests are to go farther south than Florida. Unless they're missionaries, of course."

'Then maybe the parish would send me to

Florida, and you Lutherans could pay the freight from there to Jamaica and I could be a Lutheran missionary."

"You'd make a good one, Father. You sure have the intelligence for it. With your background, we could probably train you in a couple of years."

Father Emil smiled a sweet, tolerant smile. "Being a Lutheran is my idea of a vacation," he said. "I can't imagine anything more relaxing. To take those truths that are too hard for you and change them a little to make it easier on yourself - just like, if you're tired of falling down, you turn down the force of gravity - I tell you, Luther was a great man all right." [Leaving Home, p. 28, 29]

When Norman Wegmeyer invited me to speak at this Institute he told me about the Theme: The Faith of the Minister. But as the correspondence developed, being a good Lutheran, Norman extended lots of grace and freedom and so I have adopted a

subtitle for my presentation which is Surviving in the Parish... and it seems to me that one of the best ways to approach that topic is with a joke which you may or may not be able to use. It was told to me by a Chief Corporate Counselor to a Major Corporation who said that it was true. It is about a Chief Executive of another major auto maker and his speech writer. The speech writer was the best in the business: brilliant, witty, with a touch of poetry in him. Best of all, he had a sense of whit the CEO would want to say in every conceivable circumstance. He knew how his boss thought. Or his boss thought like he wrote. In any event it was a remarkably successful arrangement. The CEO had absolute confidence in his speech writer - so much so that he stopped even reviewing the speeches ahead of time. Instead, just opened up the loose leaf notebook and read. But he was not a considerate CEO. In fact, he often belittled and humiliated his speech writer in front of others and over the years the speech

writer, although continuing to turn out masterpieces - came to despise his boss.

Finally, it came time for the speech writer to retire. But the CEO prevailed on him to stay on for one last job. It seems that he - the CEO - had been invited to address the European Economic Community and he wanted it to be at his very best. The speech writer agreed, wrote the speech, the CEO flew to Paris - went to the opening session of the European Economic Community, mounted the podium, opened his loose leaf binder and read -

"Thank you for the high honor of addressing you. Today I will identify the ten most critical problems impinging on the world. I will analyze each from the point of its historical origin, its cultural expressions, and its political, economic, psycho-social and artistic dimensions. and then I will make ten proposals - for solving these ten critical problems."

He turned the page - page 2 was blank - except for a simple sentence which read -

"OK you S.O.B., you're on your own."

Surviving in the Parish... a timely topic, I trust, in the midst of post Christmas fatigue. It was particularly devilish this year, I thought. Here it is the season of quiet joy and loveliness: the time for family and friends, and for a cup of tea in the evening, looking at the tree... but along about 3:00 a.m. December 25, Sunday morning, having presided and preached at 5:30 and 11:00 p.m. Saturday night, and having spent a few moments with family and having arranged the gifts under the tree and now - facing another series of services within a matter of hours - I began to sag. And as the rest of the human race was opening gifts while I was opening the church, and later as the rest of the world was sitting down to dinner and I was trying to deal as compassionately as possible with three very needy people who assumed, with some justification, that a building with Jesus' name on it would be open and a place where one could expect to find food and shelter in his building... I

sagged some more. Someone always needs a pastor on Christmas Day - and there are those folks in the hospital and someone always dies at about that time.

I discover each year that with a few exceptions, our culture takes about two weeks off between December 20 and January 3, at a time when you and I have to work double time. And if you ever understand the notion that, for the sake of your family, you should give as much of yourself to the celebration as others were doing, you were stretched pretty thin, or feeling guilty, or exhausted - or all of the above.

And now, finally - into a tiny empty spot in the calendar, January - while our folks are skiing in Aspen or sitting by the ocean in Naples, we're in Columbus, Ohio, at a theological seminary, talking about our faith - or the lack of it. Garrison Keillor would love it.

But it's more than the seasoned frenzy. Actually, I love it. I can't imagine celebrating

Christmas without it. It's more than occupational overload. In fact, we seem to have something of a cultural epidemic going on - a new and fairly serious outbreak of stress, stress-related illness and burnout. The New York Times last week _____ new research on a now definable condition known as Yuppie Disease. It's symptoms are anger, depression and chronic fatigue.

TIME magazine in a recent feature on the search process for pastors of tall steeple churches - noted that 25% of the clergy persons in mainline denominations are trying to move to new positions. I think that's conservative. I think half of us are unhappy and wish we weren't. Our insurance programs show that significant numbers of us need psychiatric and psychological clinical care. We're hurting and part of it is the reflection of a culture which is hurting.

A young professional in a three-piece suit, apparently late for work, came barreling into a gas station in his BMW, screeched to a halt in front of

the pump and yelled, "Can you fill it up? Can you fill it up now?" The attendant was busy and indicated that he would be there in a minute. The young man pounded the steering wheel, yelled that a minute wasn't fast enough and tore back onto the street. Minutes later he was back at the pump, having realized that he wasn't going far on an empty tank. [Newsweek, April 25, 1988, "Stress on the Job."]

That incident was an illustration in a Newsweek cover article last April about stress. It was one of hundreds of similar articles in professional journals and popular magazines recently on the topic of stress and burnout.

Anyone who deals with people: health professionals, bus drivers, waitresses and bank tellers, knows that there is something peculiar going on, something new and unpleasant. We are becoming a stressed-out society.

We are acknowledging that stress is real: that much of it is peculiar to this particular

time. People have always experienced stress, but at nowhere near the level that has become the norm for us. We know that stress is sometimes creative but mostly it is unhealthy and debilitating. It makes us feel miserable. If it is unresolved it results in a condition called BURNOUT - which is the collapse of the human spirit, the emptiness which occurs when one has spent-out all one's physical, emotional and spiritual resources. We are learning a lesson that is as old as the human race, namely that the ways to cope with stress and the threat of burnout are often spiritual.

What is stress? A psychologist friend of mine says its "any outside pressure that makes you feel bad inside."

Stress is part of being human. In all of creation, God gave us, alone, the ability to worry, the capacity to imagine the worst and we are experts at it In his newest book, Frederick Buechner says telling us not to be anxious is like telling a person with a head cold not to sneeze...

"We torment ourselves with detailed visions of the worst that can possibly happen," Buechner observes. "the nagging headache turns out to be a malignant brain tumor. When your teen-age son fails to get off the plane you see his picture tacked-up in the post office among the permanently missing." [Whistling in the Dark, p. 10]

Partially, stress results from a magnificent physical response system designed to protect us called the Fight/Flight response: "a primitive reflex that prepares humans for conflict when confronted with danger... The body secretes adrenaline and hydrocortisone. Hormones turn off some functions including parts of the immune system - and turn on short-term energy reserves." [Newsweek, op. cit., p. 42] It's a wonderful phenomenon. It's our four-alarm, call-out-all-the-troops, ability to react immediately to threats... But - it is not always appropriate. Newsweek observes: "The same mechanism that helped cavemen ward off their predators interferes when a

situation calls for a long, sustained response - like driving a car or like putting up with a demanding boss. the trouble is the Fight/Flight response gets triggered in the office... and you can't reach through the phone and strangle the person who set it off."

It not only feels miserable to be stressed, it is very unhealthy. The simple fact is that when you are stressed your digestive system isn't working very efficiently. Those jolts of adrenaline stretch the walls of your arteries and they thicken over time. The cost of stress-related illness is estimated to be 150 billion dollars per year.

What is new and particularly dangerous is that stress now results from our way of life and overwork. "Today's business world has generated corrosive ways to wear down our bodies and spirits," Newsweek observes. Fully three-quarters of Americans say their job causes stress.

A New York Times article reported a major new

study of occupation related stress. It described the classic case of a broker on October 19, whose blood pressure and pulse perfectly reflected the drop in stock prices. The more the market fell, the more his pulse and pressure increased. The interesting new discoveries, however, are that top executives are not as vulnerable to stress as others - particularly those in high demand/low control jobs, that is people who have to produce but have little say in how to produce. A recent study revealed that race care drivers are not nearly as stressed hurtling around the trace at 200 m.p.h. as they are in the pit, when the mechanics are in control. The highest risk category of all, it turns out, is mothers and homemakers whose daytime job is high demand/low control, and who then come home to meal preparation, piano lessons and an argument with a husband.

The good news, relatively speaking, is that you are not imagining it. It's not just because you're older, slower and not able to keep up.

In fact, there is more stress about the bad news. The bad news is that it feels terrible, can ruin your relationships, deplete your spirit, render you ineffective, make you sick, and ultimately kill you.

Part of our unhappiness - the threat to our survival comes from our participation in our culture. And part of it is related to our particular work - to what we do and who we are.

Our work is often lonely - structurally, the system doesn't surround us with supporters, friends and colleagues. Often there is no care-giver for us; and we insist that those who could, be called "Executives."

The local parish in which most of us work is a lonely outpost. It's difficult for some of us to have close friends - the congregation. Sometimes we are the youngest person around - by 20 years. A young woman colleague sat and wept in my office and told me that in one year she had not had a single social contact in her central Illinois, rural,

parish and she was dying of loneliness.

We live in a different time zone, live by a different calendar. We are always out of step. Sunday is Friday for us... our weekend begins Sunday night. Monday is Saturday, who wants Monday off? I want Saturday along with everybody else. So do my children. There are no weekends to go away far. Holidays are when you work double time. When your neighbors are packing up the wagon for spring break, you're in the middle of Holy Week.

We live by different rules, expectations and possibilities, and while that's part of the reason we went into this business, there is a time between the age of 35 and 40 when your peers are beginning to hit it - big and buy new houses and cars and you know with a terrible clarity, that your 3.5% cost of living increases aren't even going to make much of a difference and that what you know all around you is essentially it.

Ambition, drive, upward mobility are encouraged, nurtured, celebrated and rewarded in

the culture, but not in the church. We are not to let ambition, dreams, pride - interfere, so we bury them - or let them out and live with the guilt.

We have high demand, low reward jobs. We must function with considerable skill and expertise as counselors, scholars, executives, teachers, accountants, cheerleaders, and - of course - preachers. We can't really get by very well unless we do all of it with skills and yet we're not sure anyone even takes us seriously. We are caricatured by our culture, people don't think we have a real job, our kids tell as their friends ask - "What does your Dad/Mother do?"

We can find ourselves in every page of Anne Wilson Schaef's Co-Dependence, as those whose "lives are structured by the question 'What will others think?'... those who are totally dependent on others for their very right to exist." [p. 48, 49]

And, since there is no clear job description,

no sales quota to meet, no production schedule to accomplish, we never know when we are done working, and we are susceptible to the work addiction Schaef describes (although I'm suspicious of a cultural disease which includes everybody in the world) and which Wayne Oates descriptively called Workaholism.

One of the best essays - and one of the most helpful - was written years ago by Professor Sittler under the title - "The Maceration of the Minister (It is published several places - The Ecology of Faith and portions in Grace Notes and Other Fragments, the little book of essays published on Sittler's 75th birthday. I commend it to you. Even if you don't like what Sittler says, he uses the language beautifully and innovatively. Reading a good Sittler sentence is a little like watching Michael Jordan blast off at the free throw even for a soaring glorious slam.

"To macerate" is to "chop up into small pieces." The size or location of the congregation doesn't matter; although I have a sense that

maceration is more of a likelihood for men and women in solo situations, going it alone and doing it all.

Sittler wrote that "in seminary classrooms, the student comes to know that the 'basileia tou theou' is a phrase of enormous scope and depth, and its study ought to persist throughout life. And then the professor visits the graduate on the job and sees the lines of old books on the shelves. Filed on top of these will be mementos of present concerns: a role of blueprints; a file of negotiations between the parish, the bank and the Board of Missions; samples of asphalt tile; and a plumber's estimate." [Grace Notes and Other Fragments, p. 58]

And finally the heart ache - the sense that thins are not not right, are maybe even out-of-control in our lives: the sense that everyone else seems to be living orderly, intentional existences with jobs that pay them what they are worth and reward them for excellence while yours feels like

it is careening from one crisis to another - or like the circus performer spinning fragile plates on top of sticks, madly rushing from plate to plate, keeping them all up in the air... the disappointment that these little colonies of heaven we sense in fact are not always heavenly, that the people in them are altogether human which means at least partially hellish, translate that sometimes thoughtless, unkind, hurtful... the unflattering comparison with your successor - "Why when Rev. Smith was here we used to have big crowds on Sunday morning"... the mindless criticism, the sense that because you're the preacher they can say anything.

The way many of us try to survive in the parish, it seems to me, is by outworking everybody else, in the language of Co-Dependency, by becoming people pleasers with such a totality of commitment and that we we can even justify it as the Cost of Discipleship. Do you recall Richard Pryor's attempt to make comedy out of the terrible incident in which his drug apparatus blew up and his clothes were on fire and even though he knew better he raced out of the house and ran down the street - because he said he knew as long as he was running he was alive and that if he stopped running he'd be dead. I didn't laugh at that. It sounded too familiar.

Wayne Oates called it Workaholism - a disease which appears in our 20s and 30s and if uninterrupted can and often is fatal in our 60s. You know the symptoms - A workaholic salts conversations with allusion to how early he was at work and how she stayed later than anyone -

-a workaholic always finds a way to say how

much work he is doing

-she is always busy, breathless, slightly disorganized, in a hurry, always a little late.

-he is truly over-committed, believing that if he doesn't do it nobody else will with the sad result that nothing is done very well with resulting guilt and despair.

-she has real trouble with grace, real trouble receiving gifts from others - compliments, kindness, love, acceptance, grace - from anyone and from God.

How to survive? I do believe it helps to know why we hurt. And while there is a risk that we will wallow in self-pity or even enjoy our martyrdom, and a very real possibility that we will feel anger and resentment - I think it makes sense to look honestly at what we do and why we don't feel good about it.

And I like - modestly - to propose some survival techniques.

The first is

-Live in the present... It was a moment of revelation for me when, reading a book by James Dittes, Minister on the Spot, I saw that that wonderful character in John 5, lying on his mat for 38 years beside the pool of Bethzatha, really didn't want to be healed, at least in the present... Maybe someday, somehow he'd make it to the pool on time. I think there is something intrinsic to our humanity which is aroused by the eschatological dimension of the Gospel which leaves us always watching and waiting for "it" to happen

in the future, whatever "it" is.

We conclude, early on, that the Kingdom isn't coming in the parish. Maybe another one... with a few more members, a bigger budget, more leadership, more commitment. We invest heavily in the hope that the future will bring us joy, satisfaction, peace, salvation even. In the meantime we have to grit our teeth and slug it out.

That, I propose, is a lousy way to be in ministry and it's a lousy way to live. It's a part of our humanity that needs saving. So let's ask God to save us from it. Let's stop taking so seriously the wonderful success stories others tell us about their parishes and look with renewed interest and love and hope to ours.

Let's listen to one of our brothers, Fred Buechner:

"You are alive. It needn't have been so. It wasn't so once and it will not be so forever. But it is so now. And what is it like: to be alive in this maybe one place of all places anywhere life

is? Live a day of it and see. Take any day and be alive in it. Nobody claims that it will be entirely painless, but no matter. It is your birthday and there are many presents to open. The world is to open." [Alphabet of Grace, p. 36]

The second is

-Not all demands are equal

If they are. If you cannot say no, if you respond with totality and immediacy to every stimulus you are not in charge of your life. God is not in charge of your life. You can't really blame your people either. The fact is nobody's in charge.

The Maceration of the Ministry is a fact, maybe not even a bad fact. I love the diversity - the demand to be administrator, counselor, scholar, teacher - all before noon. Marty tells about sitting on an airplane talking to a very successful business man - whose whole life is invested essentially in selling paper clips - and thanking God for the magnificent diversity of this modest

job of ours. But - you don't have to exacerbate the Maceration. You can understand it and say no sometimes and stop believing that stuff about it not getting done if you don't do it. You can assemble a Personnel Committee - even if its only one other person and clarify what the people for who you work want you to do with your time. You will, I am sure, be surprised by the possibilities of grace which almost always occur simply by asking them to help you with this.

The third idea is -

-Administration is Ministry

Tedious routine is not the shadow side of our calling - it is better described as the enabling power of mission. Administration is helping churches do what God calls them to do. If you mean what you say when you affirm belief in the Holy Catholic Church, there is nothing more urgent than learning how to administer and doing it with intelligence, imagination, love and in prime time.

The fourth idea is that there is -

-Rent to Be Paid

Jim Glasse said it in Putting it Together in the Parish:

"Most parishes want three things from their pastor. If he meets these minimal requirements - he is free to do what he wants. Once the rent is paid she is free to march for peace, paint pictures, play golf -

"But first - the rent

1. Preaching and worship - a Sunday morning to which they are not ashamed to bring their friends.

2. Teaching and Pastoral Care - they want to know that the pastor cares about them and will help them with their faith journey.

3. Administration - a balanced budget, a working furnace and a visible and effective organization."

Glasse says paying the rent is not full time work, but if we do it - we will be free.

Idea five is -

Remember that great Michael Quoist prayer about time - "they never have enough time...they have no more time... Lord we have enough time." It's true.

When I was newly ordained, serving a small church in Northern Indiana - steel workers and small farmers and a teacher or two - I knew that it was important to prove my worth to them by working harder and longer than anyone else. It was Saturday, Sunday, early - I was behind my desk. Into the study came the husband of the treasurer to bring me my check and a dozen eggs. Mike Paddock, grizzled, tough foreman in the mill: "What the hell you doin' here on Saturday morning?" Mike asked. "You ought to be home with your family, like everybody else." "But Mr. Paddock," I protested, "I need to be available to people. I need to be here when they are and that means Saturday." "Baloney" he said. "People don't wanna see you today. They wanna go to the store, get a

haircut, watch the game. Go home. They'll see you tomorrow."

If we work all week and then tell ourselves that we must be there for our people when they are free - we will work evenings and Saturdays and Sundays and we do, many of us. So some time ago I started refusing to do that and I'm sorry someone didn't tell me even earlier. I missed bathing the babies for a while - but not for long. I simply refuse to miss one-time games or concerts... I am fairly shameless about it. I am still saying - "I can only stay 30 minutes. My son's game begins at 8:00."

Mike Paddock never heard of Henri Nouwen - but they think a lot alike. Nouwen talks about the Ministry of Unavailability - of being intentionally unavailable and what that does not only for us - but for our people. I've never refused a telephone call because I was praying - but I'd like to, and I certainly have refused meetings and appointments because I have symphony tickets. And I have had

folks say thank you for showing that it's OK to miss a church meeting in order to be with family. Nouwen was appalled at all the open doors in our offices - our relentless accessibility and the toll it had to take on us personally.

Idea six is -

-Be a Steward of Yourself... spend your lives with intention. Give it away - with imagination.

Take care of yourself physically. We are, in fact, whole beings. Your heart and spirit are connected to your arms and back and stomach. so eat right and sleep enough and get regular exercise and nurture your spirit. Read - read as much as you want to read - it is part of your job - and it is how you feed your soul.

Cite successful broker, Paul Gignilliat - quoting Shakespeare -

Cite states attorney, Jim Zartman plays violin two hours a day - 6:00-8:00!

Buechner wrote:

"At its heart most theology, like most fiction, is essentially autobiography. Acquinas, Calvin, Barth, Tillich, working out their system in their own ways and in their own language, and all telling us the stories of our lives, and if you press them far enough, even at their most cerebral and forbidding, you find an experience of flesh and blood, a human face smiling or frowning or weeping or covering its eyes before something that happened once... I cannot talk about God or sin or grace, for example, without at the same time talking about those parts of my own experience when these ideas become compelling and real." [Ibid, p.3, 4]

So, in the final analysis, it comes back to the faith of the minister. Having laughed, wept and mused over our "sitz in leben" - we are left with our faith and the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses...

And I confess to you that the topic always makes me a little defensive... Albert Curry Winn, former Presbyterian of Louisville Presbyterian

Theological Seminary - addressed the students down there recently and said what parishes want are pastors "who are not friends, but men and women of authentic faith." He cited a recent Alban Institute study of why lay people are dissatisfied with their pastors. "The expected answers were, 'be preachers on politics too much, she doesn't visit enough... but what emerged as the major complaint was 'spiritual inauthenticity.'"

Now I like Al Winn a lot and I respect the Alban Institute - but I get a little impatient with what feels like a scolding for not having enough faith. And I have fussed with this a little bit in preparation for the presentation and I have located in myself feelings of inadequacy when someone says something like people are unhappy with their pastors because they think they're phonies.

The truth is you can't conjure up faith. You can't have stronger faith because a seminary president or a distinguished research institute or a visitor from Chicago urges you to.

Faith is a gift. Know one knew that more thoroughly than Martin Luther. It is part of what God does for us - graciously - gives us the ability to respond to love and mercy - with trust.

So - what to do? Don't do anything... Instead of doing - listen for a while. Stop talking about faith and be quiet.

I'm proposing that you have enough faith - simply because it is god's gift to you. Acknowledge it, embrace it, weep tears of joy over it.

"Listen to your own life" Buechner advises, "Pay particular attention to those times when you have a lump in your throat and tears in your eyes.

Acknowledge your own experience as a person of faith - your own expertise in spiritual discipline and faith journey. You don't have time for that stuff.. You think about devotions, prayers, retreats - but can't fit them in?

Allow me to propise an alternative scenario. You and I prepare sermons - we read and study

scripture - we pray - particularly if praying means struggling with, wrestling, agonizing over, cursing sometimes, expressing our hearts - week in and week out. We spend a lot of time or spiritual discipline and we are on a journey. Our faith is growing and developing and becoming every time we lay it all out before a congregation.

So listen to your life and your spirit. And pay special attention to moments of passion and profound caring - when your eyes, in spite of yourself, are full of tears.

And listen to the Gospel. Listen to what you preach.

It begins - like music - not in your mouth - but in your ear, someone said. The Gospel is heard and experienced before it is spoken.

So listen - the words you speak to others are for you.

The words of encouragement, consolation, courage and hope which you struggle to articulate with all your integrity and strength - those words

are first of all for you.

...the bread you break for others is first of all - bread for your hunger and the cup you are privileged to raise in the company of the faithful is first of all for your thirst.

...the Gospel is not limited to your understanding of it... the Christian faith, the _____ of God, is not limited by my experience of it - or by ability to articulate it. In fact, there are times when I must articulate what I do not yet fully comprehend - or fully believe. there are times when I must rely on that larger faith of the Church to get me by - all the saints have known that.

But that Gospel is for me - and you. The grace we announce is for us. The acceptance we proclaim is our.

The Good News of the Gospel is that in Jesus Christ God loves us.

That grace requires no work, no merit, no overture, no martyrdom to merit it... It requires

nothing - only our openness and receptivity. That grace we believe is sufficient. At least once we believed that the grace of God in Jesus Christ was all that was necessary to save life -

That grace is for you...

Thanks Be To God!